

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1762

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SUBJ: EMBASSY PROTESTS NORTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR'S ATTACK ON USG

REF COTONOU 1744

1. DCM DELIVERED EMBASSY'S PROTEST NOTE AND MADE DEMARCH NOV 20 ON LUCIEN TONOUKOUIN, FORNMIN DIR OF PROTOCOL, RE NORTH KREAN AMB'S PRESS CONFERENCE ATTACKING USG AND PROMINENT COERAGE GIVEN TO IT BY OFFICIAL DAHOMEAN MEDIA (REFTEL). POINTS DCM MADE WERE THESE: A) IT IS CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE FOR A DIPLOMAT OF ONE COUNTRY TO MAKE A PUBLIC ATTACK AGAINST ANOTHER COUNTRY WITHIN THE TERRITORY OF A THIRD WHICH MAINTAINS FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE SECOND, B) PUBLICITY GIVEN BY OFFICIAL DAHOMEAN MEDIA TO NORTH KOREAN AMB'S DEFAMATORY REMARKS IS ALSO CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED PRACTICE, AND INCONSISTENT WITH FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN US AND DAHOMEY, C) SUCH INCIDENTS HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS, AND D) FOR ITS FOLLOW-UP REPORT TO WASHINGTON, EMBASSY WISHED MINISTRY'S ASSURANCE THAT SUCH ATTACKS IN THE DAHOMEAN OFFICIAL MEDIA WOULD NOT RECUR.

2. PROTOCOL DIR OFFERED HIS MINISTRY'S REGRETS OVER INCIDENT AND ASSURANCES THAT EVERYTHING IN MINISTRY'S POWER WOULD BE

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DONE TO PREVENT A RECURRENCE. HE ALSO ASKED THAT EMBASSY INFORM

WASHINGTON TO THAT EFFECT. IN ADDITION HE INDICATED HE WOULD SEE THAT THIS MATTER WAS RAISED WITH NORTH KOREAN EMBASSY. HE SAID FORMINISTRY WAS NEITHER CONSULTED NOR INFORMED PRIOR TO PRESS CONFERENCE, WHICH WAS COOKED UP BETWEEN NORTH KOREAN EMBASSY AND MIN OF INFORMATION AND NATINAL ORIENTATION (HEADED BY THE COMMUNIST AZONHIHO). FORNMIN WAS CHAGRINED ABOUT NOT BEING INFORMED. CERTAIN MINISTRIES, PARTICULARLY INFORMATION, TONOUKOUIN SAID, HAVE TAKEN DAHOMEY'S ADOPTION OF MARXIST-LENINISM AS LICENSE FOR VIOLATING MANY INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED RULES OF CONDUCT. HE INTIMATED THAT THE FORNMINISTRY HAD BEEN STRUGGLING TO RECTIFY THIS SITUATION, AND WOULD FIND OUR NOTE USEFUL.

3. PROTOCOL DIR'S ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION/IDEOLOGY MINISTRY'S ATTITUDE WAS SUBSTANTIATED BY SANMI MAMAN GOMINA, ITS DIRGEN, IN A CONVERSATION NOV 14 WITH OUR PAO. DURING AN INITIAL COURTESY CALL ON THE MARXIST GOMINA, THE PAO QUESTIONED HIM RE PUBLICITY GIVEN BY OFFICIAL DAHOMEAN MEDIA TO THE NORTH KOREAN AMB'S REMARKS THAT VERY MORNING, AND NOTED THAT THE PUBLICITY CONSTITUTED BREACH OF INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED NORMS OF COURTESY BETWEEN FRIENDLY COUNTRIES. GOMINA RETORTED RATHER HEATEDLY THAT SINCE DAHOMEY WAS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY THAT HAD OPTED FOR SOCIALISM, IT HAD CLOSER TIES WITH NORTH KOREA THAN WITH THE US., IT WAS UP TO DAHOMEAN GOVT TO CHOOSE THE MATERIAL ITS MEDIA CARRIED (I.E., IT WAS NONE OF OUR BUSINESS).

4. COMMENT: DCM MADE PRESENTATION IN FRIENDLY SPIRIT, BUT HE WAS FIRM. TONOUKOUIN APPEARED SINCERE IN HIS EXPRESSION OF REGRET AND HIS ASSURANCE THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD ATTEMPT TO PREVENT A REOCCURENCE OF HOSTILE PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE US. HOWEVER, OUR EXPECTATIONS RE THE OUTCOME OF HIS EFFORTS ARE SLIM. SINCE HIS MINISTER IS SO WEAK AND SO SELDOM PRESENT, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT OUR PROTEST WILL RESULT IN CLOSING DOWN OR EVEN MODERATING KOREAN EMBASSY'S ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN IN DAHOMEAN MEDIA. IN FACT PROTOCOL DIR MAY NOT BE ALLOWED TO CARRY OUT HIS UNDERTAKING WITH US TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH THE NORTH KOREAN EMBASSY. AND OF COURSE HIS EXPRESSION OF REGRET CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AN APOLOGY BY THE DAHOMEAN GOVT. THE EXTREMISTS ORDINARILY HAVE THEIR WAY IN ALL

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SUCH MATTERS. NEVERTHELESS WE BELIEVE, AS DO OUR FRENCH, WEST GERMAN AND AFRICAN COLLEAGUES, THAT PROTESTS MUST BE MADE IN EVERY CASE OF ATTACK OR INDIGNITY BECAUSE A) FIRMNESS IS THE ONLY ATTITUDE UNDERSTOOD BY THE KEREKOU REGIME, AND B) LATER PLAYBACK SOMETIMES INDICATES THAT PROTESTS HAVE SALUTARY EFFECTS. END COMMENT.
ENGLE

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